few decades especially the Occident has been discovering Chinest pictures and notable collections have been gathered in both Europe and America. Many experts freely assert that at its best Chinese painting is one of the outstanding expressions of man's ability to create beauty.

Yet most of the best paintings have long since been lost. This is partly because the most famous artists lived centuries ago—under the Sung, the T'ang, and even earlier. It is partly, too, because the materials employed are extremely perishable. Silk has been the favorite, although paper has also been used, and frescoes have not been uncommon. It is also partly due to the many wars which have swept China. Frail pictures, usually housed in the almost equally inflammable palaces, temples, and private homes, have been calamitously subject not only to the ordinary vicissitudes of fire but to the destruction wrought by civil strife, rebellion, and foreign invasion.

Yet in spite of the perishability of Chinese paintings and the many dangers to which they have been exposed, numerous examples are extant of Sung, T'ang, and even of pre-T'ang masters. A very few are original productions of these periods. Their preservation is due to the high esteem in which they have been held and the care bestowed upon them. More are copies, or copies of copies, for the works of the leading painters have been reproduced again and again. The copy seldom quite equals the original and in quality is often far below it, but at least it transmits something of the conception of the creator. Then, too, since the Japanese have been warm admirers of Chinese art, many examples have been preserved for us in the Island Empire, some of them originals, but more of them copies, or themes treated

in the spirit of the great Chinese artists.

This is not the place to attempt a history of Chinese painting. Some of its epochs have been noted in the narrative chapters. It is possible, however, to give some of the outstanding characteristics of the art, together with the names of a few of the greatest of the masters.

Chinese painting is with a brush and by ink and watercolors and by the Chinese is regarded as closely akin to calligraphy. Painting and calligraphy have moved hand in hand since the invention of the brush pen in the Ch'in or the Han. The brush